Church unity
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CHRISTIAN UNION AND DENOMINATIONAL LOYALTY

A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SARATOGA, N. Y., MAY 21ST, 1896.

BY

ROBERT RUSSELL BOOTH, D. D., LL. D.,

RETIRING MODERATOR.

NEW YORK:
JOHN IRELAND,
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THE

MODERATOR'S SERMON.

BY REV. ROBERT R. BOOTH, D.D. LL.D., THE RETIRING MODERATOR.

Fathers and Brethren: I salute you in the name of the Lord and I invoke upon you in the deliberation and decisions of the sessions now to be held, the wisdom and grace promised to those who seek to do the will of God, and to promote the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Among the various interests which have engaged the attention of our beloved Church during the past year, we may regard as prominent in importance the question of our relations to other branches or denominations of the One Catholic Church, that is to say, of the Church universal; while scarcely less prominent has been the connected subject of our duty to maintain and promote the welfare and progress, at home and abroad, of our own branch of this Church. The effort which has been made by direction of the last General Assembly to provide a fund sufficient to extinguish the debts of the Boards and to equip them for

larger work in new fields, has been prosecuted with great zeal and fidelity by the Committee appointed at Pittsburgh, and in due time the Assembly will be informed of the measure of success which has been attained. Without anticipating what is to be hereafter made known and considered, let it suffice for me to say, that I find, in this combination of the subjects, which have engaged so much attention, a theme suited to enlist our interest and to afford some useful instruction on this opening service. The theme is that of Christian Union and Denominational Loyalty. To the end that we may attain a clear and stimulating view of this subject, I would ask your attention to the solemn utterance of our Lord concerning the mutual relations of his followers in all the ages of time, that by a proper understanding of this, we may come to a definite conclusion concerning our right as a denomination to live and to labor with all confidence and charity, in the great harvest field, under the principles of our historical confession and polity.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

THE TEXT.—John 17 : 20-21.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,

that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

These tender and memorable words of the Lord Jesus Christ, rise far above the significance of Prayer, as prayer is commonly explained or understood. For man to pray is to ask blessings in the name of Christ, and in submission to the will of God. But for the Eternal Son of God to pray, was to declare his purpose to the Father, in the assurance that what he chose to ask, would be according to the plan and will of God in the Great Covenant of Redemption. There were occasions in the life of Christ when from the depths of his humanity he prayed, as one of us might pray. But here, speaking in his official dignity and coequal rank with God the Father, he makes a solemn declaration of his will in reference to his believing Church in all the ages of the world. How sweetly and tenderly he turns at this point, in his mediatorial prayer, from the company which stood around him, to that great multitude which he saw coming out of every clime and nation, to seek the shelter of his cross! How graciously he condescends to include them all in the scope of this act of intercession! And how full of conscious majesty and power is his expressed command to these disciples of the future, to realize and to exhibit the unity which would attest that he was sent of God! To attempt to explain and to enforce these words is therefore to discuss the theme of Christian Union,

or the idea of that relationship which Christ desired his followers to realize and the true method of attaining it. With this intent we scan these words. And at the outset we observe that there are three specific statutes in this act of Mediatorial legislation.

THE UNION OF BELIEVERS ONLY.

(1) It is the Union of believers only which is here considered and defined. The persons whose relationship he is thus adjusting are those "who shall believe on him through the word of the Apostles." This excludes at once from the range of this divine decree all those dead branches which have only a formal connection with Christ the living Vine—all those organizations of Human Craft or power which have assumed the Christian name, without receiving the life of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and all those visible constructions have been substituted for the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost. Notinhg that unbelieving men can do or fail to do, can have any connection with the oneness which is thus predicated of those who believe in Jesus Christ. The will of Christ in this particular, concerned his true and faithful followers only. It is the relationship of the members of his mystical Body he has in view; the Spiritual Church which alone is Catholic and true and holy. This fact limits the discussion.

THE KIND OF UNION.

(2) The kind of Union which is in the mind of Christ is also brought before us in the light of an example. "As thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." It is then in Christ's relation to the Father as Mediator and Redeemer that we are to find the model of the fellowship which should subsist among his believing followers. It is clear that our Lord is not speaking of the substantial oneness with the Father which is the essence of his eternal power and Godhead, but simply of the established harmony of purpose and affection, and that identity of interest which makes God, and the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, to be one. As Christ was in the Father and the Father was in him, united by a perfect sympathy and working for a common end, so all true believers, it is in these words declared, should so be bound together by their participation in the blessings of the Common Salvation and by their desire and purpose to carry on the plans of Christ to glorious fulfillment. It is therefore the oneness of a sympathetic and accordant brotherhood which this illustration sets before us, a recognized identity of spiritual interests; a felt communion in their aims and purposes and hopes; a common life and love extending from the Father through the Son, to all of every name and form who are in Christ

by Faith. This is the Saviour's illustration and conception of the Unity of his believing followers, and again I say that this, properly understood, makes the second limitation to the problem.

THE REASON FOR THE UNITY.

(3) Once more, we find in the text a statement of the Reason for which this Unity of Christians was desired by Christ. It was that "the world may believe that thou hast sent me," and this again is a most important limitation. It is as if he said—"Let them be one, not for their own self aggrandizement, or for the increase of their honor in the world, or for their self-complacent admiration of the methods of government which they may establish, or for sake of realizing any theory of Church structure, but 'for my sake,' that this harmonious agreement among the members of a race which sin has set at enmity, may impress the world with the conviction that the power of God continually abides in my Gospel, and that the world may be more and more drawn to the cross." This is the reason which our Lord assigns for desiring the Union of his disciples, and this, it is clear, reduces discussion upon it to far narrower limits than those over which this investigation is often extended. To sum up then the positive demands of our Lord's order in this department of the Christian life, we find in these words naturally

and Scripturally interpreted the expressed desire of Christ for the Union of his believing followers in mutual respect and sympathy and loving co-operation, to the end that his name and grace may be diffused abroad throughout the world for its salvation. And it is therefore in the light of these registered demands of Jesus Christ to which all other Scriptures treating of the same subject are beautifully accordant, that we must enquire for the practical principles of Christian Union and the right methods of promoting it in our own time and sphere of labor. The importance of the subject hardly needs any special commendation.

In looking at the Church of Christ as a visible reality we cannot but be pained at the manifold indications that much is yet lacking from the fulfillment of our Saviour's command. If it is true, as I shall attempt to show, by and by, that many of the current aspirations for Unity are in their nature such that they can never be realized; on the other hand, it is no less true that there is jealousy, division and strife in many quarters where there should be only harmony, co-operation and peace. We hear the sound of warfare in the army which our Lord has organized to overcome the world, we feel the chilling influence of alienation and suspicion in the one household with Christ has welcomed with the words, "All ye are brethren," and thus we ought to lament, as Christian

men, the existence of these divisions, and as much as in us lies, should put away the causes of them and stand before the world upon Christ's ground, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." But, brethren, Christian Union is not simply a sentiment of courtesy nor a mood of self-abnegation. It cannot be promoted by the surrender of established principles drawn from the Word of God. It is distinctively a characteristic of the living and believing Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and must be intelligently understood, and conscientiously promoted, or all our building for this end will be but heaping uncemented stones together. Having before us, in explicit terms the Lord's conception of it, as to its nature and intent, we must accord with that, nor are we bound in any way to bow to the mistaken theories or claims of those who would impose upon their brethren a self-enacted view of Christian Union. Hence on this ground and this alone, we are prepared to ask, What are the principles to be affirmed ?

THE PRINCIPLES TO BE AFFIRMED.

And first: True Christian Union does not lie in Uniformity of structure or of government and no strictness of such uniformity ever can secure it. We mean by Uniformity, the consent of any company or multitude of persons to place themselves

under the same rules of discipline and conduct ; to act and to appear just like each other in all the outward expressions of their inner lives. There are doubtless some forms of association in which this entire similarity of structure and appearance is deemed desirable and subserves a useful end. It is important that an army should be compacted and made strong by some such uniformity of discipline and dress. There is a measure of it in the life of families and in the established order of local institutions, in which a few individuals are acting together under specific rules. Yet even the discipline of an army must be diversified by some concessions to the varied qualities of men, and must be capable of adaptation to unforeseen emergencies, and the same need appears in every other relationship where organization is desired for energetic action. Humanity abhors an unvarying sameness in any sphere of life, as truly as "nature abhors a vacuum." It is however a cherished theory with many that the true Unity of the Church of Christ can only be secured through Uniformity ; in other words, that Corporate Unity depends upon a certain sameness in the methods and polity of government, without which no real validity exists or can exist in any age. The History of the Church of Christ is largely made up of the outworking of this theory and of the steady protest of humanity against it.

The Judaizing disciples in Jerusalem attempted to enforce this view upon the Gentile converts in less than twenty years from the day of Pentecost and for this cause Paul withstood Peter and "rebuked him to his face." The Church of Rome has tried the same experiment since the days of Hildebrand, and as often as she has succeeded in casting this pall of spiritual despotism upon the Church of Christ so often has it been cast off with an indignant protest against an oppressive rule for which there is no warrant in the Word of God. The Church of England, too, has tried it with penalties of fines, evictions and imprisonments, attempting to arrest the progress of dissent and to make the sway of her Bishops as absolute as the divine right of her Kings, and yet to-day the established Church in Great Britain is far outnumbered by those who exercise their right of liberty in ritual and in government. The early Fathers of New England tried it in their day with an inconsistency that fills us with amazement, but neither the burning of obnoxious books, nor banishment, nor the death penalty itself, could hinder the growth of independent Christian sects, determined to own no other rule in spiritual things but that of Christ. It is the plainest lesson of Christian History, that it is as impossible to succeed in these experiments as it is un-Christian to attempt it.

The Church of Christ is not to be united by any

compress of Uniformity. This theory of Union is contrary not only to the instincts of Humanity but also to the expressed will of Christ himself. There is no word to indicate that he intended to impose it on his followers. The oneness for which he interceded was to subsist among believing hearts and to be like the harmony of purpose and of feeling which existed between his Father and himself. It is not intimated in our text or any where, that he felt the least concern about the circumstantial varieties of his disciples, or that any one visible and formal outward structure was designed to comprehend them all. By many solemn words, he taught them of the inwardness of true religion, of the spiritual nature of his Church, and the importance of forbearance among all who had received him as their Lord and Saviour. And in the work of his apostles, we find this spirit constantly illustrated. They founded many churches and sanctioned many different methods of administration, and yet the Church of Christ was always one in their esteem ; just as the human race is one. What has been recently written by Prof. T. M. Lindsay, in the Contemporary Review, October, 1895, may stand for final statement on this aspect of our theme. "The corporate unity of the Apostlic and Sub-Apostlic Church included a federation of the many hundreds of individual communities organized for the purposes of discipline and

administration on types differing more widely from each other than any existing systems of Church government, but keeping the sense of the oneness of the Christian Church alive within their hearts by the thought that all shared in the same sacraments, were taught by the same word, obeyed the same commandments and shared the common hope of the coming of the kingdom, and they made this unity manifest by mutual help in all Christian social work and by boundless and brotherly hospitality to all their fellow Christians." And we may confidently add that other unity than this will be sought for in vain in the early annals of the Christian history. Therefore in our solicitude for Christian union we need not look for it in the line of Uniformity of structure or of rule.

NOT IN DENOMINATIONAL AGREEMENT.

Second : We hold it to be no less true that the Union among his believing followers for which Christ intercedes, does not lie in the line of Denominational agreement, or in the surrender of matured, well defined and conscientious religious convictions, on the part of some branches of the Church to others. Denominations represent the diversities of faith and form, which are originated among beliving men by their varying interpretations of the system of truth which Christ has established in the world. In one way or another they

express the thoughts of their adherents concerning the best and truest method of organizing and extending the invisible or spiritual Church as a visible reality on earth. They may be founded on a truth or on a half truth or an error. The criterion in reference to this must be the Word of God and they can be rightly judged by no other standard. If that condemns the plea on which they differ from the Church at large, they are without excuse and must account for their departure from the standard to the one Master, even Christ. But if the truth they hold is sound and can be justified by the appeal, then surely it would be a violation of the rights of conscience to require that it should be suppressed or modified at the demand of those who entertain a different view, and even though the grounds of difference be, in the opinion of many, non-essential, still the latitude which is allowed to honest judgment by the Scriptures justifies the dividing lines which may be drawn around it, if men will only stand within them in the proper spirit. The abiding test of all denominations must be the hold they have upon the fundamental truth, upon the Cross of Christ and all the doctrines which cluster round it; but with this may be coupled peculiar methods of confessing them or peculiar views of the best mode of working them, whether in worship or in life.

And now in reference to this diversity, which

has issued in the actual divisions of the one spiritual brotherhood, into many visible and separate organizations it is unquestionably true and safe to say that they are quite consistent with health, prosperity and Christian Union if they are held subordinate to the great principle by which the Church of Christ is organized. Where is the evidence that the liberty of the Apostolic age has been abridged in our own age? Who has the right to claim that the doctrinal diversities which appear in the Epistles of Paul and James and John, which did not in their day obliterate or confuse the great reality of Catholic Unity, are now to be regarded as its obstacles? The breadth of fraternal tolerance and recognition may surely in our day extend up to the high table land of Apostolic Christianity! The interest of Christian Union cannot be hostile to that demand of conscience which requires believing souls to affirm the things which they believe. The truth concerning these denominational distinctions is that while they hinge for the most part on non-essentials, whether of doctrine or of form, they are still so connected with the limitations of the Human intellect and with the idio-syncracies of Human character that they are really most important, andi n fact inevitable, and are likely to be maintained as long as men are "in the body" and it may be afterwards. The fact that Christ's disciples are thus

diversely organized, under his sacred Banner, does not require disloyality to any sound conviction of the understanding, nor does it prove that it is impossible to find a higher Unity amid all these diversities. Denominational distinctions become a scandal and a shame only when they have been exalted to the level of essential saving truth, or when in their name and for their sake men claim exclusive rights in the one common brotherhood and cast reproach on those for whom Christ died—on those in whom he lives and reigns. Keeping in view these negatives we now may turn—

THE SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF UNION.

Thirdly. To what we believe to be and what we affirm to be, the scriptural expression of the idea of Union, as here defined by Christ and as it is to be desired and sought for, among all true believers. Rejecting the Union which is procured by uniformity and that which requires the renunciation and suppression of sincere convictions, we may find the basis of the Unity of Christ's disciples in the one life which they have received through faith in him and in the ministrations of the one Spirit by whom they are guided into the paths of truth and duty. The grand peculiarity of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour is that it is a life-giving, life-sustaining system. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor

uncircumcision but a new creature." A penitent believing sight of him "who bore our sins in his own body on the tree," secures a new creation, a begetting from above, for those who hitherto were dead in trespasses and sins," for "to as many as received him to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." A life manifold it may be in its functions and varieties of expression, but one in its essential properties, begins to be, in every son of Adam's race, where Christ is known, accepted, loved—a life which has one Saviour for its centre, one Spirit for its Holy Guide, one Father God for its protecting dwelling place. Rites, ordinances, institutions, all the forms of structures which the Church contains, important as they are, are but the scaffolding by which that life of God within the soul is reared and built in visible proportions. Behind them all, the life itself rests on the one foundation which is Christ and is comparted spiritually by the one architect, who is the Holy Ghost. Thus on the side of this interior spiritual life, the Church of Christ is One—as truly one to-day on earth as it will be in the Eternal Sabbath, a body of which Christ alone is Head—a vine whose branches are all joined to him, the root and trunk—a temple formed of living stones, each resting upon Christ.

This is the true conception of "The Holy Catholic Church" of the Apostles' Creed, "composed of the whole multitude which was conceived in the eternal purpose of Redemption and given unto Christ to be by him redeemed from sin and death." It was to the ingathering of this great company that he was looking forward when he interceded for all who should believe on him, through the Apostles' word. It was with these in view that he desired that they should all be one according to the pattern of the fellowship existing between his Father and himself. But if the Spiritual Church is thus truly and organically one, in its essential life, then why the expressed petition that his followers should be united? This question touches the centre of the subject. Because Christ knew the difference between the Redemption of his people and their full and final sanctification; because he foresaw clearly that on its pathway through the wilderness his Church would be surrounded by temptation, exposed to conflict and division, through the strife of tongues, the pride of season, the stubbornness of prejudice, the rivalry of party spirit, therefore he left the prayer on record as the great signal, which is to be passed along the lines of march from age to age until the mighty columns shall have reached the promised land, "Remember that all ye are brethren." In other words he desired that what is true essentially

of his disciples might be completely realized in outward harmony, and that amid all minor differences, they might agree to stand together and to work together in the bond of love under the guidance of his Word and Spirit.

And now as this was the desire of Christ, so it is in this direction that all who hear his word with reverence must move for its fulfillment. We are to seek for something better than the things we see in Christendom, but we are to seek it according to the Master's plan. The craving for organic union or for one visible, all-comprehending structure, is a misleading impluse when tested by the Word of God and by the history of the Church. Nor is it likely that, even on a smaller scale, efforts to force together organizations that differ only in non-essential features, will have any actual results of Union. The experiences of the past year are not without instructive lessons in respect to this. We need not here refer to particulars. In all that relates to Church Union, the failure of such efforts has been most significant, while as a display or development of Christian Union, the very failure has been a step of progress in the right direction. Such efforts are not in any case to be despised, but that which they may be expected to accomplish is far more the revelation of a fellowship that now exists, than the binding of discordant elements together in fetters of expediency or force. Here

then we find it safe to stand until God's providence shall open some new door and speak some new directing word. But in this attitude the law of Christian union should be acknowledged as a solemn obligation, the law which in this larger sphere must be fulfilled by charity, by mutual respect, by co-operation and communion, by magnifying the essential and minimizing the non-essential elements of Christian truth. The oft-repeated words of Witsius presents this ground of faith and conduct in regard to Christian Union. "In things necessary unity, in things doubtful liberty, and in all things charity." Nor need we fear that in this attitude there is involved the necessary toleration of any vital error. The truth which Christ has testified and sealed by the shedding of his most precious blood the truths which are instrumentally the constructive forces of the spiritual Church of God, these ever must be sustained and defended without compromise. But happily the lines of division run for the most part outside of these essential fundamental truths, and in so far as these are not involved, the vital things in which all Christians are agreed should form the bend of Union, the ground of mutual respect, the basis of communion and the inspiration to vigorous, united work for God. The love of Christ should rule in all his members and that love should overleap the barriers of custom and of mere opinion in the host

which follows him to glory. This is the only line of practicable progress in Church Union as men are constituted, and on this line from time to time results like that which marked our history in 1870, may be expected more and more, as light increases, and as love controls believing hearts. But we must wait for such results, believing that when they come from God, they will promote his glory and the good of man. Meanwhile let nothing darken in our minds the clear assurance that Christian Unity is now a fact, according to the will and testimony of our Lord and Saviour. He did not ask of God in vain. It is for us in the large sense that we are Christians, to recognize that fact and to insist upon our share in this grand heritage.

Let it suffice, in closing this section of our subject, to sum up what we have aimed to present in the admirable words of the former Episcopal Bishop of Ohio, Dr. G. T. Bedell. "The Unity of faith in the Son of God; the Unity of common regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the Unity of love to Christ, and of love in Christ for all who are Christians; the Unity of loving work for Christ which amid all distinctions of minor dogmas, has a single eye for the glory of Christ and a single aim to develop his kingdom in every ransomed soul—that is the Unity of the Church; that is the Unity which has been manifested in every

age, and that is the Unity for which Christ prayed and which was granted him and which distinguishes and separates the Church of Christ from the world. In that Unity all methods of holding truth coincide; with that Unity denominational distinctions are entirely consistent. As we exhibit the loving principles of that divine Unity all the earthly that divides the spiritual brotherhood becomes secondary in thought, and the children of God realize their absolute and eternal oneness."

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

In turning from this view of Christian Unity, perhaps discussed at too great length, we are led to the consideration of its practical application to the scene and circumstances in which we are assembled as representatives of one of the great branches of this Church of Christ on earth. To us especially in this responsible relation, the value of this definite and clear conception of the meaning of our Saviour's prayer, as secured in the spiritual unity of his believing people, is in several particulars applicable and apparent. Some of these may be briefly cited, while fuller attention may be given to one which is of special pertinence to us to-day, as an assembly gathered in the name of Christ.

(1) This view of Christian Union relieves the solicitude, well meaning, but often ill-directed, for

methods of Church Union which involve the suppression of sincere convictions and well established principles of spiritual life and action. There is a way of looking at the subject, which lays a burden on the conscience of believers for which there is no cause. The sin of "schism" of which we hear so often and so much, stands, not in maintaining different denominational connections, not in adopting conscientious views of Government and discipline, but in dividing Christ's spiritual body for the sake of forms and pretences which have no scriptural foundation and in refusing, on purely arbitrary grounds, to recognize those whom Christ has owned as his disciples or to meet them at his table. No one can thus divide the Church of God or make the trivialties of outward form the occasion of exclusive claims in the "one family which is named of Christ" without becoming a "Schismatic." But no such burden need lie upon the consciences of those who recognize the common life of Christ's disciples and respect their individual liberty. And hence we say with confidence that on this ground we may be well content to cease mistaken efforts which can have no definite results, and prove the validity of our ministry, the efficacy of our Sacraments and the usefulness of our methods of administration by the work we do for the kingdom of our Lord, while ceasing not to honor and to love "for Jesus' sake" all those who differ from us.

(2) This view of Christian Unity reveals a practicable path of progress, in the federation of those branches of Christ's Church which are agreed as to the substance and objects of the Christian system. Such federation, in so far as it can be realized without distress or friction, would give far more emphatic evidence and illustration of true Christian Unity than any ecclesiastical uniformity, in which sincere opinion had been forcibly suppressed. To some extent this has been realized among the diverse branches of the great Presbyterian family, and there can be no reason why, under God's providence it should not be extended until some methods of agreement, fellowship and apportionment of spheres of labor in the great harvest field should be distinctly formulated and accepted as the bond of federative Union among all other branches of the Christian Church which clearly hold the doctrines and the forms of Evangelical religion.

(3) Such a view of Christian unity consists and harmonizes best with earnest and effective co-operation among Christian men in all methods of philanthropic work and in all agencies of social reform. It is instructive to observe that the philanthropic endeavor of our time is almost wholly associated with this view. It has not been developed along the line of strict denominational or ecclesiastical associations, but by the combination of good men of various views, uniting to promote the cause of

temperance, of municipal and national reform, of peace among the nations and the relief of the oppressed. It is for the welfare of the world that Christ's disciples of every name should, while maintaining their distinctive principles, thus enter with high spiritual aims into the commonwealth of labor for the best temporal and social advancement of the race. And in proportion to their estimate of Christian Unity, will be the earnestness and courage of their co-operation in this sphere.

(4) But not the least among these estimates of profit in connection with this view, is that which associates with the maintenance and the intelligent intensity of "Denominational Loyalty," and of this we aim to speak in what time remains. We use this phrase to describe a moral attitude which is not in the least opposed to Christian Catholicity of thought or effort. Within the larger sphere of Christian brotherhood there must be scope for the free exercise of personal convictions and affinities, just as within the state there must be familyhood or individual life. And as like joins like, "Organization" must ensue, upon the basis of the truths which have been apprehended through the word and by the Spirit of the Lord. For lack of time we may not enter upon a discussion of the Denominational idea as it is now developed on the broad area of Christian life on earth. Let it suffice to say that its development in all these varied forms

is fraught with mighty power, which clearly manifests divine approval, and that it carries with it the inherent right of each denomination to claim the affection and service of its assenting members both by the affinity of faith and by the bond of honor. In other words, the denomination, embodying some real force, in thought or life must vindicate its right to be, by its fidelity to its own faith and order, subject only to the larger law of charity, and in proportion as this fidelity is clear-sighted, self-sacrificing and intense, it will produce a "loyality" which in whatever sphere it is displayed will mightily promote the progress of the great salvation.

PRESBYTERIAN DENOMINATIONAL FIDELITY.

The bearing of this truth upon our own Denominational position was never more apparent or more urgent than it is to-day. The Presbyterian Church in which we have our place, constantly and joyfully recognizes its relations of love and service to the great familyhood which is "named of Christ on earth." None have surpassed her in the charity which takes in all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. But that which is distinctly her own in thought and form is precious to her sons and daughters, and we believe important to the whole Church of God, and the right estimate of these which are the things we stand for, will surely pro-

mote the increase of this loyalty in our beloved Church.

(a) And first of all we mention her position in reference to the word of God. If it be true, as was said in an address delivered before the last Assembly by President Patton, that the great question of our time is simply this—"What is the Bible?" or what must we believe concerning "the sufficiency, the authority, the inspiration of the Scriptures," then it is also true that on this fundamental question this Church has testified in no uncertain tones. That which of old was written in the first chapter of the Confession of Faith concerning "the infallible truth and divine authority" of the whole word of God has been reiterated and reaffirmed as the profound conviction of this Church, speaking and acting as an organic whole, in the light of all the hostile criticism and all the calm inquiry which this latest age of intellectual life, has spread around her. Just as little as she faltered in this faith when half a century ago Prof. Bauer and the school of Tubingen declared the mythical origin of the Holy Gospels, does she falter now that a new attack assails "the truthfulness of the sacred history and the faithful witness of miracle and prophecy." The record of this Church upon this subject has been made in lines which none can misinterpret, and it is worth our while to pause and recall it at this time. In 1855 Dr. Henry B.

Smith, a scholar competent and calm, a theologian of unsurpassed attainments, a leader always strong and safe, declared the doctrine of "Inspiration" as it was held in what was then the New School portion of the Presbyterian Church. As if with a prophetic foresight, surveying the whole field of theory and speculation, he presented the conclusion that the only view consistent with Scripture and the Confession is that of "Pienary Inspiration," extending to the words as well as to the contents of the several books; the view which is embodied in the formula, "The Bible not only contains, but is the word of God."

"To the idea of inspiration it belongs," said he, "that it should be considered as plenary; that is, the divine influence which is its source extends to and pervades the whole contents of the Scriptures, both historical and doctrinal; it includes the whole of the strict divine revelations, and also whatever the sacred writers utter as historians and witnesses, Inspiration is the organizing principle of the whole Bible, just as the principle of life is the organizing energy in every bodily frame, extending to all its parts, even those seemingly the most insignificant. It is not confined to new truths, it rehearses the old; but of both the old and the new it makes one coherent whole. It comprises both the matter and the form of the Bible; the matter in the form in which it is conveyed and set forth. It extends

even to the language, not in the mechanical sense that each word is dictated by the Holy Spirit, but in the sense that, under divine guidance, each writer spake in his own language according to the measure of his knowledge, acquired by personal experience, by the testimony of others, or by immediate divine revelation. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And thus is the inspiration plenary, since the Holy Spirit works in all parts of the Scripture, and makes of the many one, of terrestial dialects a celestial tongue, out of human and divine elements one divine work, God's Book, given by men and for men."

That testimony, accepted without a dissenting voice, was the procursor and the basis of the great reunion movement. And the constructive statement in the plan of the Union was in strict accordance with it. "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments shall be acknowledged to be the inspired word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice and the Confession of Faith shall continue to be received and adopted as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures." This was indeed a grand expression of the mutual confidence of Christian men till then divided by the memory of voices which gave, or seemed to give, uncertain sound upon these very points. That confidence is justified by each affirmative response which from that day till this has

conditioned every act or ordination in this Church. "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?" This Church is therefore bound in honor to maintain the traditional view of the Holy Scripture, and in the fact that she does thus maintain this view, is founded a just claim for loyalty and warm affection on the part of all her sons who prize the precious word of God. And all the more, we venture to affirm, because that which is held among us in the bond of honor is also well sustained by evidence and proof, supplied by witnesses of competent authority, confirming on linguistic and archæological ground, the moral argument derived from the unbroken tradition of the Church and from the unerring testimony of her glorious Head. Our present service does not permit a fitting presentation of this grand defence, but surely it is not out of place to mention two great names, pre-eminent among the multitude of scholars who have met and checked this last assault upon the word of God—the names of Dr. William Henry Green, of Princeton, and of Prof. A. H. Sayce, of Oxford. Thus then, this Church of ours is calmly confident in standing immovable, close by this sacred trust, in which she sees enshrined the whole interest of the world's redemption. To her, it is as true to-day as ever in the past, that this Book, the Bible, so far from

being "full of human errors, contradictions, fables, legends, from which with utmost difficulty the word of God is to be sifted out," is in all its parts inspired, historically true, inerrant as it came from God, and testifying from Genesis to Revelation of the grace and fulness of Jesus Christ our Lord, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." For her fidelity to this essential view of the Holy Scriptures, this Church of ours is worthy of loyal love and service.

(b) And next we mention as a reason for this loyality, the peculiar doctrinal presentation of the great truths of evangelical religion which this Church maintains. We hold that there is a "system of doctrine" taught in the Scriptures and that this system is contained in our Confession of Faith. While it is true that the conditions of membership are simply the evidence of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is also true that the conditions of official service, whether in the ministry or the eldership, are the sincere acceptance of that system of doctrine by a promise solemnly made both to man and to God. In making this distinction between the conditions of membership and the conditions of office-bearing, this Church stands for a principle which is not only reasonable and useful, but which is also strictly accordant with Scripture. When the Apostle Paul

heard the question of the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved," he answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But the same apostle also thought it needful to write the Epistle to the Romans and therein to teach, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So in all cases the simplest affirmation of evangelical promise must lead the enlightened mind back to the question of cause and effect which are involved in the Gospel. The answer of Paul to the jailor, really suggests all that is contained in the Epistles, the whole Pauline Theology. Recognizing that principle, this Church has its theological system into which she aims and desires that all its members should grow, and which she excepts and requires all its office-bearers should maintain and defend. Without doubt this system is an advance on the presentation of truth made by the so-called Catholic creeds, and we have no hesitation in saying that it is an advantageous advance. It is important for the Church and the world that there should be a more complete statement of Christian truth than is found in the Apostles' Creed, or in Creed of the Council of Nice, or in the earlier creeds of the Reformers. To say that there may be a progressive advance in the method of statement does not imply that there can be a change in the substance of revealed truth. The

truth must always be the same as an objective reality, but the apprehension of truth is progressive within the limits of Scripture. And when that apprehension is clear, consistent and spiritual, as it is in that system of doctrines contained in our Confession of Faith, it is indeed a great light for the world. And all the more, because while the great land-marks are fixed in that system, the range of personal liberty also is broad. Nothing more clearly reveals the wisdom and grace of the men who arranged the terms of reunion in 1870, than the fact, that refusing to introduce or provide for certain methods of stating our doctrines, they insisted simply and solely on the basis of the "system of doctrine." This was large-hearted and generous, and to this day has operated in spite of all controversies concerning revision and criticism, to hold this Church firm to the essential truths of the standards; to the doctrines of grace as taught by Peter and Paul; to the sovereignty of God in the salvation of men and to the fulness of his purpose of mercy through the blood of the Atonement, while at the same time there has been and is and will ever be, liberty in the personal appropriation of truth and comprehensiveness in the methods of statement. But if one does not accept and honor the system of doctrine to which he has sworn, surely he ought not to complain if he is regarded as out of place

in this Church! This statement of fact concerning our system of doctrine emphasizes the claim that it should be a strong incentive to loyalty. In the whole Commonwealth of Israel there is not a Church more generous, more patient, more truly comprehensive as to the varying phases of the Pauline theology, that this Church of ours, and it ought to be loyally loved for that reason by all who are led into true liberty through the Spirit of God.

LOYALTY TO SCRIPTURAL AND APOSTOLATIC POLITY.

(c) There is also cause for denominational in the Scriptural and Apostolical polity, under which this Church is organized and governed. We go to the New Testament for our polity as we do for our doctrine. A body of believers, associated for the great pusposes of Christ's kingdom, must be organized in some orderly manner. And while we may not wisely claim that there is a prescriptive and unvarying rule, in the New Testament, it is our strong conviction that there are land-marks, examples and orders, to which we are bound to give heed. It is certain that this Church, in common with many of the Reformed Churches of Europe, was thus constituted, with its ministerial parity and its representative system. It was not by accident nor through a perverse opposition to the old ecclesiastical methods, which had wrought so much corruption and misery, that the fathers so

constituted it, but because in returning to the word of God for their doctrine they are also constrained to adopt the precedents and rules of the word of God for their polity. It is significant of their sense of the importance of this, that the name "Presbyterian," was chosen as its appellation, rather than some name descriptive of a doctrinal basis. To the reformers of Scotland the great issue was really that of Church order and government, since in many respects "the articles of religion" and the statements of "the Confes sion" were in accord. But the eccleslastical sys tem which confronted these Scottish reformers was one which they could not find in the New Testament, nor in the first Christian century. Moreover it was a harsh, cruel, intolerant, oppressive system which was administrated in their day and could not be reconciled with the spirit of the gospel of Christ. Hence tney become "Presbyterian," taking their name from the fundamental fact, in Apostolic Church order, that the Presbyter was the one essential and universal Church ruler, and that the people of God had the right to be represented in their Church government. That they were right as to this, in respect to the first century, is now hardly disputed by scholarship. What Dean Stanley affirmed in his sermon before the Presbyterians of Scotland, concerning the testimony given by the most learned of all the recent

Bishops of England, J. B. Lightfoot, of Durham, in the essay attached to his edition of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, ought to be final, viz.: "That the early constitution of the Apostolic Church of the first century, was not that of a single pastor, but of a body of pastors, indifferently called Bishops or Presbyters, and that it was not till the very end of the Apostolic age that the office which we now call the 'Episcopate' made its way gradually and slowly in the Churches of Asia Minor; that Presbytery was not a later growth out of Episcopacy, but that Episcopacy was a later growth out of Presbytery, and that the office which the Apostles adopted was a rule not of Bishops, but of Presbyters." It is true that it is alleged in reply to this positive statement that the Historic Episcopate with its three orders did in fact supercede the earlier polity and became universal and that for this reason it is now expedient that this should be recognized and adopted as a concession of liberty. But it must not be forgotten that the development which in the second and third centuries produced the Historic Episcopate, did a few centuries later produce the papal supremacy, and that if there is a just claim in behalf of the first departure from the New Testament rule, there is a logical pressure which tends straight to the second, making the road along which so many of the clergy of the Church of Eng-

land have followed John Henry Newman into the commuuion of Rome. Now against all this you have the self-evident rule that, that which was good for Christ's Church under the guidance of the Apostles is good enough for all time. So our fathers judged, and enshrined the reformed doctrine which they found in the Scriptures in a polity which conforms a closely as possible to the rule under which the Church of Christ had its first marvellous growth.

On this ground we maintain not merely the validity, the sufficiency of our orders, but their Scriptural superiority. Not impeaching the work or the standing of others of whatever name, but rejoicing in their achievements for Christ, we cannot for that cause undervalue a polity which we firmly believe is the best of all, for the spiritual life of the Church, which gives us a ministry of equal rank under the headship of Christ, and an eldership appointed to teach and to rule, and representing the believing people of God, even as it was ordered in the churches of Antioch, Philippi and Rome, a polity which provides for the unity of the whole Church under a government which administers one law of order, before which all the members are equal and all benefits are distributed without partiality; a polity which provides a discipline by which offences may be tried in an orderly manner, according to an acccpted standard o[illegible]

doctrine and duty, but which imposes no other penalties than those which relate to the withdrawal of recognition and fellowship, a polity which provides also a scheme of interdependant methods of Christian activity which reach over the whole field of denominational service, both at home and abroad, for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. What we need is loyalty rising to the point to enthusiasm for this scriptural and beneficent polity. Realizing as it does in the ecclesiastical sphere that excellence which Abraham Lincoln ascribed to our national system. "The government of the people by the people, for the people," unimpeachable as to its scriptural right and its beneficent working, this system of government needs no apology, depends on no patronage, and accepts no other test of its claims than the Apostolical patterns. In this sense of denominational loyalty our system may worthly claim the confidence and censecrated devotion of all its members.

METHOD AND PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EVANGELIZATION.

(d) I only add to this enumeration of the reasons for loyalty to our Church, its idea, method and purpose of Christian evangelization, or its conscious relation to the progress of the kingdom of Christ. It seems a self-evident propositson that a Church which derives its doctrine and polity direct from

the New Testament Scriptures must be not only evangelical but evangelistic. The gospel truly apprehended and properly organized becomes of necessity a living force in the world, through the power of the life-giving Spirit. Christ dwelling by faith in the hearts of his people, speaks evermore the words of his last great command, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." It is thus a distinctive characterastic of a true Church that it discriminates between all methods of benevolent and philanthropic activity in favor of Christ's view of the need of the race and of Christ's method of relief by the spiritual renewal of men. Hence a true Church will be evangelistic, operating and applying the Evangel which is evermore "the good news" that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And this has been pre-eminently a characteristic of the Church, whose servants and soldiers we are. Not depreciating the aims and efforts of "institutional Christianity," but on the contrary using them as occasions demand, we do nevertheless believe in the Lord's work of redemption as the true and best cure of the sin and woe of the world. For this reason this Church has ever been a Church consecrated to the great work of missions, both at home and abroad. And whether we view it as an achievement, already partly accomplished, or as an endeavor which still urges her onward, it must be acknowledged that there is no aim con-

ceivable, more grand and heroic, more worthy to rouse the soul to enthusiasm and to command the highest loyalty of her members, then this aim and purpose to conquer onr country for Christ and to proclaim his grace to the world. When we think of our work of Home Missions from this point of view, how grand and Christlike it seems ! What feeble beginnings ! What insufficient resources ! What determined antagonists ! What an increasing burden of labor, and withal what magnificent progress ! The heroism of true Christian devotion was never in the world's history more nobly illustrated than in the labors of those Presbyterian missionaries who have left their sweet Eastern homes, to establish the Church of Christ on that ever receding line of the Western frontier. Some of us who are here to-day can recall almost the whole history of that heroic advance. We have seen its expansion from the Genesee Valley and from the banks of the Ohio, to the far Pacific coast, now studded with churches and Christian institutions of learning, and we can intelligently endorse the grand eulogium of President Cleveland upon the work of Home Missions as ried on by this Church : "A work not only important for spiritual salvation but absolutely indispensible to oppose the evil influences which are apt to pervade the atmosphere of newly constituted communities." Whatever may be the present condition of those

great states of the West, however pungent the Senatorial criticism of the remarks of the President in view of those "many churches in which there is real and unaffected piety and those happy and Christian homes where the sons, the husbands and the fathers pray," it remains the truth, as we who for half a century have shared the burden of this work well know, that the whole development of evangelical Christianity in those newly settled regions has been brought about under God by the co-operative labors of Home Missionary organizations, supplying both the men and the money for this work of evangelization. Few indeed are the churches which have sprung up without such assistance. And so looking at the wondrous result and realizing the vastness and importance of the work that remains to be done, we, as a Church have strong reason to cultivate a spirit of loyalty in respect to this branch of our evangelistic endeavors. It is the cause of our country! Its rescue from the unsleeping forces of evil—its subjection to the reign of righteousness which alone "exalteth a nation." It is worthy of the highest enthusiasm. Nothing more grand will ever occupy an Assemby's attention than the need of this cause of Home Missions today, as it stands burdened with debt and yet struggling forward to fulfil its duty toward God and our country.

And our plea for loyalty to this Church and its work is intensified when we turn our eyes to that wider field of the world which we in common with so many Christian Communities are seeking to enlighten and save by the good news of the Gospel. Here we contemplate a work as yet only initiated, a work in which our own Church is only one of many co-operating auxilaries, but it is cause for joy for us to realize, that when this whole movement for the world's rescue is measured, our own share in it is not small. The appeal for Foreign Missions has not come to us in vain. The work begun at the beginning of the century at a few scattered points of occupation, has been most wondrously enlarged. It is established upon every continent and proclaims the word of life in almost fifty languages. Our horizon has constantly enlarged as new doors of opportunity have opened. We hold a commanding relation to the races and lands which are in sympathy with the advance of the new civilization, and there is a special power in our mission work, because it represents the American idea of personal liberty, and has no possible connection with any scheme of national interest. There is special power in it also because it is "Presbyterian," offering to the evangelized peoples the parity of the ministry and the right of self-government in the Church. Thus on every hand the reasonableness of our Foreign

Missionary endeavor is manifest and we are look-at it to-day in the light of recent events which for impressive interest, thrilling, stimulating, and even heart-rending, have not not been surpassed in a hundred years of the world's history. And we thank God that the appeal has come home to the warm heart of this Church.

Our interest in the work is on the increase. Our plans are enlarging. We are strong in our zeal because we are everemore hearing the word which comes down like a hurricane from the Mount of Ascension, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." We place this word against the hostility and criticisms which would arrest the progress of the cross and leave the world to sink in hopeless night. Believing in the facts declared in the Gospel, this Church of ours is committed by logic and love to his enterprise, and must evermore say with that Apostle, " Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." It is true that the human element in this work must be disproportioned to the magnitude of the expected result. But we are depending for the increase of power upon the omnipotent love which has ordained that these human instrumentalities, feeble and few though they be, shall be the conditions which shall determine the great movements of God's hand in extending the gospel of Christ. And as we know not the day nor the hour, so we know not the act or word or the impulse which

shall give new strength to the work of redemption. In this view of it our work of Foreign Missions calls for an ever increasing devotion. The outlook is inspiring. It is a grand thing for the Christian to turn his thoughts constantly toward this prospect. It was the inspiratian of the holy Apostles. It was ever in the mind of the Lord Jesus Chrsst. It is a fitting theme for the prayers and the plans of this great assembly, that out of these councils may come some force which shall urge forward, if only by some small increase, the coming of the latter day of glory. Whatever fails of our expectations concerning this meeting, may there be at least no failure in the practical accomplishment of progress for the great mission work of our Church.

A PRE-EMINENT CLAIM TO OUR HIGHEST DEVOTION AND SERVICES.

Brethren of the General Assembly: We have now considered the Scriptural view of the Unity of Christ's disciples, and have seen that it is constituted by the existence of that divine life which he creates in the souls of all who are united to him by faith, and that it is revealed and matured by the exercise of that brotherly love, which draws together into one family all who sincerely acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of this spiritual Church. We have also seen that this

Unity is compatible with the maintenance of those convictions and preferences which are the products of the growth of the divine life in the individual soul. We have seen, too, that this Church of ours is established upon solid Scriptural grounds and that there are qualtities of good inherent in its doctrine and polity, which properly call for the loyal respect and earnest support of all who are associated within it, by the pledge of a faith plighted to God and to man. We may thus heartily respond to and adopt the saying of the late Bishop Simpson, of the Methodist Church: "We live to make our own Church a power in the land, while we also live to love every other Church that exalts our Christ." But with these principles recognized and proclaimed, we may not forget, least of all seould we forget here, that this Presbyterian Church has a pre-eminent claim to our highest devotion and service. What we are to do for the good of the world, for the salvation of souls, for the honor of Christ, will be most effectively done through our fidelity to the trust which this Church has placed in our charge, and by this we mean that we should be individually true to her standards, her polity, her government and her methods of work, while we regard with respect and affection all those who entertain other views, if they give evidence of love to the one Master, who is the Head over all who are members of his mystical

body, the Church universal. This of old has been the position of the Presbyterian fellowship. In this attitude this Church has stood in our land, like a rock amid the waves of contention.

And in this attitude we must abide if we are to continue to do the great work for Christ to which we are called. But unhappily we are at this time forced to confront some adverse conditions, which are occasion of a wide-spread apprehension and grief. There are, to say the least, misunderstandings among us which threaten to diminish, if not to over throw this old-time loyalty which was, not long ago, the all-pervading characteristic of the officers and members of this beloved Church. God forbid that on this occasion I should utter one accusing or incriminating word concerning any who sincerely believe that they have cause for discontent with the actions or utterances of former Assemblies. They are our brethren beloved in the Lord. They are Presbyterians by conviction and choice. They profess the same loyalty to our institutions as that for which we are pleading, and yet it would be utter foolishness to ignore the fact that there are misunderstandings which conflict with the peace and prosperity of our Presbyterian Zion. On the one hand there are charges of undue severity in the administration of discipline, coupled with a plea for liberty within certain limits which up to this time have not been defined.

On the other hand there is a fear, must I not say a conviction, that essential truths are at stake in this controversy, and that this Church is contending for honor and life in the stand which she has recently taken in her discipline and deliverances. To many of us this controversy has been inexpressibly painful, and there can be no doubt that it has materialy interfered with our financial prosperity, that is to say, with the prosecution of our Christian work, at home and abroad. It adds to the painfulness of the present condition that no real effort has hither to put forth to secure a removal of these misunderstandings, by brotherly conference and that arbitration of differences which we have so highly approved as a method in international controversies. I venture then to submit the inquiry, irregular though it be at this point in our proceedings, whether it would not be possible to secure, during the present meeting of the Assembly, some kind of brotherly conference which might avail to throw light upon our present perplexities and afford some clear indication as to what is desired in the way of an extension of Presbyterian liberty. By such a course we should at least elicit some clear-cut, positive statement as to what is really the object of these agitations and should be enabled to draw the lines within which all true Presbyterians ought to stand. It may be a dream, it may be a delusion; but speaking as it were for

the last time in such a place of public authority, I appeal to the sound, Christian sense of this venerable Assembly, to take some proper measures to ascertain what it is that divides us, and what is required for the abatement of strife and the reconciliation of parties at variance. And may I not add to this statement, or at least express the conviction, that the mind of this Church is practically one, as to the rightful authority of its constitutional government, as to the absolute sacredness of the inspired word of God, and as to the truthfulness of that system of doctrine which we have found in the Scriptures.

MUST STAND HERE.

Here then we must stand! We cannot consent to unloose our hold on the Old Testament without impairing the New Testament also. We cannot impeach the testimony of our divine Lord without weakening his claims to be the true and only Saviour of men. We cannot consent to a system of teaching which discredits the miracles, regards the doctrines as obsolete, and the sanctions as meaningless, with any good hope of keeping our Lord in his place as the Redeemer of a lost world. Loyalty to this Church demands that we should be true to its essential ideal. We may well do anything for the restoration of peace, except to consent to the tearing down of the foundations on

which this Church of Christ is built "four-square to all the winds that blow." It would be indeed a peril for all the good instructions of our American life if ever the Presbyterian Church loses its solid grip upon the truths it was organized to maintain; if ever the Presbyterian pulpit comes to be generally regarded as chiefly a field for display, or a base of supplies, or a rostrum for the promulgation of erratic opinions. The times call for men who believe the things they teach, who stand by the pledges of obedience and service which they have given and who would rather die than be false to a trust. Oh! brethren, in this greatest of all the centures of time, with the life movements of history maturing fast towards the dawn of the latter day of glory—with the whole world waiting to hear "the old, old story" from this Church which enshrines the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, may we rise to the grandeur of our high calling, and may the spirit of the Holy Dove come down and abide in our beloved Church, with new fervor from this meeting of the Assembly.

THE TWO MODERATORS.

(*An Extract from The Interior, May* 25, 1896.)

On the seventh of this month "The Interior" said in proposing the name of Dr. J. L. Withrow for the moderatorship :

It is because it is believed that, should the Assembly elect him to the moderatorship, it would bring back the old confidence which blessed the church so long after the reunion ; because it would show that the discrimination of the past few years is not intended to be invidious, though it has appeared to be such, and because such appearance should not be emphasized, much less should it be intensified—and because it would be a distinct revival of faith, hope and charity, and produce an increase in the devotion of the whole membership to the whole church, her work and her institutions, at home and abroad—therefore this suggestion is made. It could certainly never be more opportune and beneficial than now.

But there was more in store in the Assembly than we could have hoped for. That largess came in the retiring moderator's sermon. The parts of it which appear in this paper will be read and reread with great delight by all who love the prosperity of Zion, by all who seek peace and pursue it, by all who abhor strife and bitterness and warfare

in our councils. Never before did a retiring moderator more appropriately though unconsciously introduce a successor. Dr. Booth's sermon will recall to every mind the first inaugural of Abraham Lincoln, in which he plead so nobly yet so sadly for the peace of his people.

Herein "The Interior" was blind—that while hoping and praying for the return of faith, hope and charity, brotherly love and confidence, and a turning of the church from strife to the work of her divine commission, *Faith, Hope, and Charity had already come*, and we knew it not. While we were pleading for a cessation of theological wars between brethren of the same faith, Dr. Booth was putting in type, in nobler phrase, and in more cogent reasoning, that most Christlike appeal to his brethren.

This appeal came from a man who was himself a gladiator in the polemic arena, a man who had no reason, in fear, to shrink from conflict. Any man might have said, "Let us have peace," and his words would have not awakened an echo. But when the greatest military genius of the century said it, all the world heard, and bowed its hearty acknowledgment.

Now our faith and hope in a bright sky, and in favoring winds from heaven for our church will not be darkened should there be here and there a clap or a rumble of thunder or a flash of angry fire in

the dying-away and retiring storm. The better day has dawned. There will henceforth be more conservatism in progress, and more progress in conservatism. There will be less suspicion and more confidence, less acrimony and more charity—and a bending anew of the energies of the church to the age long war of the conquest of the world to our risen and reigning King.

It was a high honor which the Holy Spirit bestowed on the retiring moderator that his words should mark the dawn of a new era. It was a high honor the King and Head of the church bestowed on the incoming moderator that he was called to the high place to be an instrument in the hand of God to further the fulfilment of the prayer of the dying Redeemer. When the two clasped hands as they stood before the people it was a handclasp which will never be released, a hand clap, not of reconciled opponents, but that of two strong men, mighty men for the faith of Christ, saying for him, and by his authority, "My peace I give unto you, my peace I leave with you."

Upon what is this confidence founded? It is in the loyalty of the whole church, however it may have mistakenly been impugned, to all the essentials of our most holy faith. There have been errors of judgment, errors of emphasis, errors of prejudice or of passion—and we must confess it, because it is yet in human nature, errors of ambi-

tion ; but beneath all this, broad, high and eternal, lie the foundations of our faith, and upon them we all stand. The basis of hope and the basis of peace, present and final, and the only basis for time or for eternity is the truth as it is in Jesus—and that truth pervades the Presbyterian Church as the clear morning sunshine pervades the air ; while, to further illustrate it, another metaphor may be employed when we call it the Rock of Ages. No words that we can devise will so fully express it as that employed by the Holy Spirit—"All and in all."